

Research Brief Physical Education

Question: Why should P.E. be offered in high school?

Summary of Findings: For the past 50 years, poor physical health of adolescents has been a concern in the U.S. The obesity rate has tripled from 5% in 1980 to 15% in 2000. Based on studies done in the late 1940s and early 1950s, it was found that America's youth had poor muscle strength. In response to this, President Eisenhower created the Presidential Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. Although still in existence today, the precedence of this council has vacillated, depending upon the priorities of the political party in power.

With more emphasis placed on high stakes standardized tests, the priority of physical education classes has taken a back seat. "In 2003, only 55% of high school students were enrolled in a physical education class, only 28.4% were attending physical education class daily and only 39.2% were physically active during class" (Participation in high school physical education-United States, 1991-2003). Based on a survey done in 2003, slightly more than half of the states in the United States, mandated physical education courses for grades 9-12, while only one quarter of the states required one year or two semesters, one state required three semesters and the rest required one semester or less. According to Jeff Blumenfeld, from PE4LIFE, today's children are in danger of having a shorter life expectancy than their parents because of lack of physical activity and the health issues that can arise from that inactivity. Diseases associated with lack of regular exercise are heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, formerly known as adult onset diabetes, high blood pressure, certain cancers, obesity, low back pain, hypertension, and depression.

The literature reports that students who are healthy and physically active, are more inclined to be more intellectually engaged and alert. A quality physical education program provides opportunities for students to develop their motor skills, strengthen their self-confidence, and expand skills in leadership, teamwork, and cooperation. The National Health objectives for 2010 are to: 1) increase to at least 50% the number of adolescents who are in physical education classes, 2) increase to at least 50% the amount of time students are physically active in physical education classes, and 3) educate students to become and stay physically active during their lifetime. Physical education classes should help students develop their "athletic identity" (Why gym class matters: Kids' attitudes toward sports affect

their adult health) so that they can think of themselves as physically active and act on that thought. "Physical education helps students develop the knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviors, and confidence needed to be physically active for life, while providing an opportunity for students to be active during the school day" (Promoting better health strategies). Some suggested ways to do this include: providing ample opportunities for

high school students to actively participate in activities they find enjoyable that can be continued throughout their lives, such as swimming, tennis, and golf; partaking in more in-depth learning about the purposes of, as well as the pros and cons of physical activity; receiving and meaningfully processing information on the long and short term benefits of regular exercise; and participating in competitive and cooperative physical activity opportunities.

Components of an effective physical education program:

1. It should have a high priority in the schedule and be counted in the GPA and class rank. It should also have the same enrollment numbers as classes in other fields.
2. It should be taught by a highly qualified and well-trained teacher who is certified in physical education.
3. The curriculum should be aligned and coordinated with a high quality health curriculum.
4. The activities should be sequential and move from moderate to vigorous.
5. On-going staff development should be provided for all staff on the importance of physical activity and for physical education teachers to continue to develop their skills.
6. All students, including those who are on I.E.P.s, should take a daily physical education class for at least 225 minutes a week during their entire K-12 years.
7. Adequate and appropriate equipment and materials should be provided and maintained.
8. The stakeholders should be educated about the importance of physical education and physical activity.
9. The school and community agencies should work together to design, develop and implement programs that encourage participation in physical activities outside of school and with family members.
10. Fitness tests should be developed to keep track of students' growth and the data used to inform and design appropriate curriculum.

Online Resources:

- Evidence based physical activity for school-age youth
This article describes a review of 850 articles written on and about physical activity for youth.
http://www.pe4life.org/articles/Youth_PA_recs.pdf
- Fitness report cards part of 'new PE' movement

A description of fitness report cards given to students in a district in Illinois is provided.

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2002/06/19/41gym.h21.html>

- Internet spawns online physical education
This article briefly describes an online physical education course offered in Florida.
<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2003/01/29/20gym.h22.html>
- Is it physical education or physical activity?
This article provides a definition for and examples of physical activities.
<http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/template.cfm?template=difference.html>
- McDonald's is heading to school gym classes
This is a brief description of the Passport to Play Program being sponsored by McDonald's.
<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2005/09/21/04health-3.h25.html>
- McDonald's Passport to Play kicks-off in 31,000 U.S. schools
An overview of McDonald's Passport to Play program for grades K-6, along with a list of ways
McDonald's has made changes in the hopes of supporting healthier choices is provided.
http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/template.cfm?template=mcdonalds_passport.html
- National Association for Sports and Physical Education
This is a synopsis of the California study showing a positive relationship between academic achievement and fitness levels.
<http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/>
- New study supports physically fit kids perform better academically
This is a synopsis of the study from California showing a relationship between academic achievement and fitness levels.
http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/template.cfm?template=pr_121002.html
- Online phys ed takes hold in Minneapolis
A description of an online physical education program is provided in this article.
http://www.boston.com/news/education/k_12/articles/2005/10/20/online_phys_ed_takes_hold_in_minneapolis?mode=PF

- Participation in high school physical education-United States-1991-2003
A synopsis of a study conducted where it was found that high school students are minimally involved in physical education programs.
http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0906/is_36_53/ai_n6256675
- PE4 Life
A brief list of the goals of the PE4LIFE program is given.
<http://www.pe4life.org/about.php>
- PE promotes active lifestyle among adolescents, study finds
Reasons for and support of physical education classes are offered in this article.
<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2000/06/14/40obese.h19.html?print=1>
- Physical education group targets childhood obesity
A brief description of a study that was proposed to study overweight children and hypertension is provided.
<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2004/05/12/36obesity.h23.html>
- Physical education and activity
2000 survey results about physical education programs in the U.S. are provided in this article.
<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/shpps/factsheets/pdf/pe.pdf>
- Physical education is critical to a complete education
This article is a description of the physical, cognitive and affective benefits of physical education for students in elementary, middle, and high school.
http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/pdf_files/pos_papers/pe_critical.pdf
- Problems associated with lack of exercise
A glossary of terms associated with lack of exercise is provided.
<http://www.diagnose-me.com/cond/C380381.html#H5>
- Promoting better health-Strategies, School Programs
Some ideas and suggestions for implementing physical education and physical activities programs in schools are highlighted in this article.
http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/physicalactivity/promoting_health/strategies/school.htm

- Report stresses need for physical education programs in schools-from the National Association for sport and physical education
A synopsis of a report by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education that indicates that most states were not meeting minimal recommendations for physical education is provided.
http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m3225/is_10_64/ai_80099760
- Schools giving P.E. short shrift
Reasons for offering physical education classes along with the Presidential Fitness tests are given in this article.
http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1571/is_32_17/ai_77812354
- State physical education requirements
A synopsis of the physical education requirements in each state is provided.
<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/jan-june02/pestate.html>
- Why gym classes matter
The definition of and importance for students to develop “athletic identity” are described in this piece.
http://www.conwaytennis.com/article_wsj_gymclass.htm

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